
The Communication Culture of Mosque Caretakers in Maintaining Congregational Harmony in Urban Housing

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the egalitarian-transformative communication of mosque managers across varied metropolitan contexts to sustain congregational unity. The study is prompted by disputes among congregations from different Islamic traditions, especially the Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi organizations, in which differences in ritual preferences may underpin opposing claims to mosque identity. Data was collected through a qualitative case study approach, employing in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The results show that harmony is not maintained through standardized religious practices, but through recognition of differences, creation of dialogical spaces, equitable distribution of religious roles, and informal daily communication. Mosque leadership is not just an administrative authority but also a cultural mediator, negotiating symbols, mitigating potential disputes, and fostering congregational interaction. Egalitarian-transformative communication is presented as a methodology for managing intra-Muslim difference and improving social cohesion in metropolitan mosque communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Urban residential mosques cannot be seen solely as venues for ceremonial prayer. In contemporary Muslim countries, mosques serve as social and cultural spaces where religious identities are deliberated. Visitors to residential mosques originate from diverse social, educational, economic, and religious backgrounds. This diversity enhances religious life but may also lead to conflict if not managed through transparent, equitable, and inclusive dialogue. In this setting, residential mosques face a distinct challenge: they must serve as communal spaces for multiple guests without being perceived solely as representatives of a specific religious community (Rohman et al., 2023).

The phenomenon may be observed at Nurul Iman Mosque in the Taman Dhika Residential Area, Sidoarjo. The mosque has witnessed difficulties among its members with diverse Islamic orientations, especially Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi groups, due to the heterogeneous religious backgrounds of its worshippers. Secondary ritual practices, including reciting *qunut* in the dawn prayer, the number of adhans during Friday prayer, collective dhikr, the tradition of *shalawatan*, and the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and Isra' Mi'raj, may become sources of contestation over religious identity in the mosque. In this context, the mosque is not only a place of worship but also a venue for social negotiation of symbols, traditions, authority, and religious identity (Thoha & Ibrahim, 2023).

Nurul Iman Mosque is a noteworthy case because such tensions never escalated into a prolonged open conflict. Rather, managers of mosques created communication patterns that made different religious groups feel recognized, acknowledged, and accommodated. There were several ways of socio-religious compromise, such as: inviting preachers from NU, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi backgrounds in a rotational manner; organizing Friday preachers in the same manner; accommodating differences in adhan and dhikr practices according to the preacher's background; regulating the recitation of *qunut* on particular days; and continuing to provide space for the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and Isra' Mi'raj. These behaviors suggest that congregational harmony is constructed not just via formal norms but also through a communication culture created by mosque administrators to read, moderate, and accommodate difference (Rohman et al., 2023).

This dynamic conceptually illustrates that the religious peace at the mosque level cannot be described alone by normative tolerance. Harmony is to be seen as the result of communication processes, symbolic interaction, and the development of common meaning in the everyday life of congregants. The distinction between *qunut* and non-*qunut*, one or two adhans, loud or silent dhikr, and Islamic memorial ceremonies is not just a technical difference in prayer. They are also emblems of religious identity, with social value for particular populations. Therefore, the communication of mosque administration is vital not just as a channel of sharing information but also as a cultural tool for controlling symbols, sustaining recognition, and generating a sense of belonging among congregants (Jabarkhail, 2020).

From the point of view of symbolic interactionism, social meaning is not something that springs forth on its own; it is made in the interactions of individuals in social life. The production of shared meanings is a process that includes religious symbols, communicative language, demonstrations of acceptance, deliberative forums, and casual interactions on the mosque veranda. Mosque administrators are social actors who are not only involved in administering but

also in producing the notion of harmony through their ways of speaking, listening, deciding, and treating different groups. In this view, the mosque can be seen as a site of symbolic interaction, in which the congregants learn to see difference as not a threat but as part of religious life to be tolerated with maturity (Blumer, 1969).

Transformational leadership theory is equally pertinent to communication by mosque administrators in turning congregants from users of the worship facilities to participants in the life of the mosque. Transformational leadership is not merely instructive and controlling but inspirational and empowering, and involves individual consideration and members' participation in social transformation. The communication of the mosque chairman at Nurul Iman Mosque is not just about issuing orders but also about building trust, creating space for dialogue, including congregants in deliberations, and fostering a sense of belonging to the mosque. This means that leadership communication in a heterogeneous mosque must be a combination of egalitarian openness and socio-transformative capacity (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Several prior studies have looked at mosques from different angles. The optimization of residential mosques has been studied several times, as the mosque can be a public space and center of community activities, not only a location for ceremonial prayer (Thoha et al., 2021). Other research identified mosque-based initiatives to enhance community welfare, showing that mosques may be powerful centers for social empowerment (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Jabarkhail (2020) on the subject of mosque leadership discovered that in the setting of a mosque, servant leadership emphasizes humility, listening, and community service as the foundation for sustaining congregational involvement. Mahfud et al. (2024) further showed that mosque leadership plays a key role in fostering religious moderation and character education among heterogeneous urban Muslim populations.

However, most previous studies prefer to locate mosques in the frameworks of management, da'wah strategy, organizational leadership, or community empowerment. They have not fully clarified how the communication of mosque administrators functions as a religious-cultural practice of mediating intra-Muslim conflicts in residential mosques. The subject, still unexplored, is how the communication of leadership by mosque administrators contributes to a culture of harmony through the recognition of various symbols, worship, religious affiliations, and modes of congregational involvement. This is an important topic because, in increasingly diverse urban Muslim populations, challenges of harmony occur not only between different religions but also within the Muslim community itself (Thoha et al., 2025).

To fill this gap, the article offers egalitarian-transformative communication as a paradigm of mosque administration communication to support congregational unity in urban residential mosques. Egalitarian is a communicative style that offers space for multiple groups of congregants, acknowledges differences of opinion, and prevents a single religious affiliation from monopolizing the mosque's identity. The term transformational refers to the ability of mosque administrators' communication to transition congregants from the role of worshippers who attend the mosque to active participants in the mosque's socio-religious life. The combined effect of these two aspects is that harmony cannot be maintained by neutrality but must be built through communication that recognizes, welcomes, empowers, and turns diversity into common energy.

The difference in this essay is that the communication of mosque administrators is not just seen as a personal leadership style, but as a religious communication culture that maintains the social cohesion of the congregants. The article addresses not merely the way the mosque chairman

speaks, but also the socio-cultural process that enables the maintenance of concord despite divergent Islamic customs. The paper, taking the Nurul Iman Mosque as a case study, explains how congregational harmony is constructed through a confluence of formal debate, compromise in worship customs, acknowledgment of communal symbols, interpersonal contact, and a fluid, informal culture ingrained in everyday mosque life (Dewi, 2022).

Therefore, this study discusses the role of egalitarian-transformative communication of the mosque chairman to maintain the congregational unity at the Nurul Iman Mosque, Taman Dhika Residential Area, Sidoarjo. More specifically, it explains how diversity in religious affiliation is negotiated through the communicative practices of mosque administrators, how egalitarian and transformative communication shapes congregants' sense of belonging, and how informal communication culture is an important mechanism for preventing socio-religious tension. Theoretically, the essay contributes to religious and cultural studies by presenting a model of mosque communication that integrates religious symbolism, social interaction, and congregational peace. In practical terms, it gives a framework to the administrators of mosques, managers of religious institutions, and Muslim communities in cities to handle the differences among Muslims in an inclusive, participative, and harmony-oriented way.

2. METHODS

This study was conducted using a qualitative case study design. This approach was selected because it provides a deep insight into the communication strategies of the mosque chairman to ensure congregational peace, particularly in an urban residential mosque with people of different religious affiliations (Miles et al., 2020). The case study design was utilized to explore Nurul Iman Mosque in Taman Dhika Residential Area, Sidoarjo, as a unique case of socio-religion, a residential mosque visited by congregants of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Salafi, and other Muslim organizations with varied ritual preferences.

The investigation was conducted in Nurul Iman Mosque in Taman Dhika Residential Area, Sidoarjo. This site was purposively selected because it possesses features of particular relevance to the objective of the article: congregational diversity, variations in ritual practices, and the efforts of mosque administration to promote inclusive and participatory patterns of communication. The mosque is a suitable place to study how religious communication works. Religious communication is not only a channel for conveying messages but also a socio-cultural tool for negotiating differences and building community harmony (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data sources: Primary and secondary materials. Primary data were collected from the mosque chairman, mosque officials, and congregants who were directly involved in the socio-religious activities of Nurul Iman Mosque. The mosque chairman was the major informant due to his centrality in decision-making, delivery of messages, and handling communication among attendees. Other mosque administrators provided information on the dynamics of internal communication, and congregants reported how the administrators' communication patterns were received, interpreted, and experienced in regular mosque life. Secondary data were in the form of records of mosque activities, organizational charts, da'wah agendas, publication materials, activity notes, and visual documentation that support the research context. These sources are congruent with the original thesis, which gathered primary data from the mosque chairman,

administrators, and congregants and secondary data from mosque records and research on leadership communication in religious organizations (Miles et al., 2014).

Data were acquired by in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The mosque chairman, the administrators, and the congregation were interviewed to ascertain their experiences, perspectives, and assessments of the administration's communication style in sustaining unity. The interviews explored the ways administrators communicated, formed interpersonal relationships, dealt with different religious beliefs, incorporated congregants in decision-making, and addressed possible tensions among them. In the original thesis, the interviews were conducted to examine how the mosque chairman and administrators generated messages and handled internal communication, and how congregants received leadership communication in a multicultural mosque community (Moleong, 2021).

We observed mosque administrators as they communicated in a range of activities—worship, religious study sessions, administrators' meetings, and casual conversations between administrators and congregants. Observation was important because congregational harmony is not always evident in formal documents but can be observed in everyday conversation, greetings, administrators' responses to congregants, communication patterns after congregational prayer, and the social atmosphere on the mosque veranda. Using observation, the study sought to understand how administrators communicate not only in words but also through social practices ingrained in daily interaction. The original thesis also indicated that the observation was limited to contact among the chairman of the mosque, administrators, and attendees; ordinary communication; decision-making; and the management of religious activities (Yin, 2018).

Data from interviews and observations were supplemented by documentation. Documents reviewed include agendas of mosque activities, images of activities, resources for religious study, organizational charts, publications, and other papers connected to the work of the administrators and congregants. The study was aided by documentation, which helped reveal how communication patterns among the mosque administrators manifested not only in direct interaction but also in the design of programs, the selection of preachers, the scheduling of activities, and other forms of institutional mosque communication. In the original thesis, the documentation comprised images, organizational charts, promotional materials, and audio or video recordings of activities at Nurul Iman Mosque (Moleong, 2021).

The data were analyzed thematically in three phases: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drafting. In the condensing step, interview transcripts, observation notes, and mosque documents were selected based on their relevance to the objective of the research. The data were classified into major themes: inclusive communication, discussion, acknowledgment of difference, informal communication, congregational engagement, and conflict management. In the display stage, the topics were organized into analytical narratives that illustrate the relationship between administrators' communication and the making of congregational harmony. In the stage of drawing conclusions, the researchers identified the patterns of communication that emerged from the field and related them to the notion of egalitarian-transformative communication.

The investigation was informed by two theoretical perspectives: symbolic interactionism and transformational leadership. Symbolic interactionism was utilized to understand the role of religious symbols, ritual practices, communicative language, and informal encounters in the shared meanings of attendees. Transformational leadership theory, in turn, was applied to explain

how the mosque chairman managed the mosque's operations administratively, how he inspired the congregants to participate, to build a feeling of belonging, and to engage in the mosque's socio-religious life. Through these two viewpoints, the analysis extended beyond a description of communication styles to explain how communication works as a cultural mechanism for sustaining harmony.

Data authenticity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation used data from the mosque chairman, administrators, and congregants. Technique triangulation was used to compare interview data, observational conclusions, and documentation. Moreover, persistent observation was employed to verify that the data not only represented instantaneous occurrences but also demonstrated communication patterns that recur in the everyday life of the mosque. Thus, the results of the research are intended to provide a strong empirical basis and a complete account of how egalitarian-transformative communication sustains congregational harmony at Nurul Iman Mosque. Similarly, the original thesis stated that the data validation was done by continuous observation and triangulation by comparing the outcomes of the interviews, field observations, and pertinent documents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

This section presents the research findings on how mosque administrators' communication works as a socio-cultural mechanism for sustaining congregational harmony in an urban residential mosque. The findings show that congregational harmony is not formed merely through formal rules, but through everyday communication practices that are inclusive, equal, personal, and transformative. In the context of congregants with diverse religious affiliations, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi, mosque administrators play a role not only as managers of mosque activities, but also as social mediators who ensure that differences in religious practices do not turn into open conflict. The original thesis also shows that the communication style of the mosque administrators tends toward an egalitarian-transformative model, namely, communication that emphasizes openness, participation, a personal approach, collaboration, and an informal culture in maintaining congregational harmony.

3.1.1. Harmony Begins with the Recognition of Difference

The first finding shows that harmony in an urban residential mosque is not built by standardizing congregants' religious practices. Instead, mosque administrators recognize that congregants come from different Islamic understandings and traditions. In the early phase, these differences created tensions because each group tended to bring its own religious style into the mosque. Differences in practices such as *tahlilan*, devotional praise, *qunut*, collective *dhikr*, and styles of religious study became sensitive points that could trigger friction among congregants.

“Of course, in the beginning, with various religious understandings and different groups present, each group tended to put the others down. There was even a time when specific practices associated with our *Nahdliyin* brothers were carried out in this mosque. Yet the congregants here are not only *Nahdliyin*; there are also Muhammadiyah and Salafi congregants. For example, some congregants performed *tahlilan* and devotional praise, while others did not. From there, tensions emerged.” (Mosque Chairman, 2025).

The quotation shows that conflict within the mosque is caused not merely by doctrinal differences but also by a struggle over symbolic space. Practices such as *tahlilan*, devotional praise, *qunut*, and collective dhikr are understood not only as rituals but also as markers of group identity. When these symbols are brought into a shared mosque space, competing claims arise: Whose mosque is this? Which tradition does it follow? Which Islamic orientation does it represent? In such a situation, the administrators' most decisive strategy is not to impose a single standard of worship but to build awareness that the mosque is a shared space. Harmony, therefore, begins with the recognition that difference is a socio-religious reality to be managed, not erased.

This finding is important because it shows that moderation at the mosque level does not always begin with sermons about tolerance but with practical decisions that provide room for diversity. Administrators do not merely maintain activity schedules; they also sustain symbolic balance among congregants. In this sense, they function as guardians of social harmony amid the contestation of religious identities.

3.1.2. Egalitarian Communication: The Mosque Must Not Be Controlled by One Group

The second finding shows that the communication pattern of mosque administrators is egalitarian, giving relatively equal space to different groups of congregants. In this context, the administrators do not position themselves as representatives of any single religious group but as servants of the community who must accommodate the aspirations of all congregants. This attitude provides an important foundation for preventing any single group from dominating the identity of the mosque.

“We try to give space to the congregants. We try to facilitate their wishes, because the condition of the congregation is heterogeneous. There are various kinds of religious understandings, but we do not bring group idealism into the mosque. Even the DKM administrators must be able and willing to set aside their own understanding, because once they become DKM members, they become servants of the ummah. At the very least, we provide facilities for congregants to accommodate their ideas, from religious studies to the NU community with *yasin* and *tahlil*, as well as Muhammadiyah and Salafi groups.” (Mosque Administrator, 2025).

The statement reveals a shift in the role of mosque administrators from “owners of authority” to “servants of the community.” The claim that administrators must be “willing to set aside their own understanding” is significant. It means that once someone enters the mosque's administrative structure, personal identity or group affiliation must be subordinated to the broader interests of the congregation. This is the essence of egalitarian communication: mosque administrators do not stand as spokespersons for one religious orientation but as facilitators of diverse aspirations.

This pattern prevents the mosque from becoming an arena of symbolic domination by any single group. NU congregants retain space to practice certain traditions, while Muhammadiyah and Salafi congregants are likewise given space to practice their preferred forms of worship. Egalitarian communication thus does not mean that all practices are made uniform, but that all groups receive proportional recognition. In this context, harmony emerges from the experience of “being acknowledged” and “not excluded.”

3.1.3. Non-Authoritarian Leadership and Openness to Deliberation

The third finding shows that congregants perceive the mosque chairman's leadership as calm, non-authoritarian, and capable of embracing all groups. In a heterogeneous mosque community, the leader's personal character matters because their communication style determines whether differences are managed through dialogue or suppressed through unilateral decisions.

“The chairman is a very calm person. He is not too authoritarian and is able to embrace all groups. God willing, he can unite the congregation. From what I see, his character makes that possible.” (Congregant, 2025).

In the same interview, the informant also stated that the mosque chairman opened space for discussion:

“I see his communication style as an egalitarian style, a style of equality. He provides a very open discussion space for mosque administrators to deliberate on issues.” (Congregant, 2025).

These quotations show that mosque leadership is accepted not merely because of formal position but because of a communication style that does not pressure others. Being “calm,” “non-authoritarian,” and “able to embrace all groups” constitutes important social capital for maintaining harmony. In a mosque with many competing group interests, an overly dominant leader may trigger resistance. Conversely, a leader who opens space for deliberation creates a sense of safety for congregants to voice their opinions.

This finding indicates that mosque administrators' communication cannot be merely informative; it must also carry an affective dimension. Congregants need to feel respected, heard, and not judged. Open spaces for discussion serve to transform potential conflict into a process of negotiation. Deliberation is therefore not only an organizational procedure but also a communication culture that strengthens a shared sense of belonging to the mosque.

3.1.4. Two-Way Communication as a Way to Build a Sense of Belonging

The fourth finding shows that mosque administrators' communication does not operate in only one direction. Congregants are not merely recipients of information; they are also given space to offer input, express aspirations, and take part in mosque activities. This communication pattern makes congregants feel part of the mosque rather than mere users of worship facilities.

“So far, in my opinion, the communication has been clear, whether from the mosque chairman or from other administrators. Since I am not originally from here, I see that they use a communication style that can be accepted, both outside Javanese culture and outside other religious principles. The communication style is more two-way. Based on my experience with the administrators, we provide a lot of input and feedback.” (Congregant, 2025).

The quotation shows that mosque administrators' communication has cross-cultural adaptability. The informant, who is not originally from the area, can readily accept the administrators' communication style. This indicates that the communication developed is not exclusive, not bound to a single local culture, and not tailored to only one religious group. Two-way communication gives congregants space to become involved in the mosque's social processes.

Congregational involvement through input and feedback indicates that mosque administrators are not only performing administrative functions but also building participation.

From the perspective of transformative communication, congregants are positioned not as objects who merely receive instructions but as subjects who help shape the direction of mosque life. This is where a sense of belonging emerges. When congregants feel that their opinions are valued, they are more readily moved to maintain harmony, support mosque activities, and remain engaged even when differences arise.

3.1.5. Informal Communication Culture as an Unwritten System

The fifth finding is one of the most striking: congregational harmony is maintained not only through formal meetings but also through a culture of informal communication. Casual conversations, encounters on the mosque veranda, exchanges after prayer, and mutual reminders among congregants form an unwritten social system. This system serves as a cultural mechanism that prevents the mosque from being controlled by any single group or easily provoked by differences.

“Our approach so far has not been formal. We can meet face to face, we can meet often. We can communicate directly about anything that is lacking in the mosque, anything related to mosque prosperity. We chat casually on the mosque veranda while joking.” (Mosque Administrator, 2025).

Another statement from a mosque administrator strengthens this finding:

“This is indeed homework for us, but alhamdulillah it has become a system. It is not written in the articles of association or bylaws, but this diversity is something we must accommodate. Gradually, it has become an unwritten system that this is the condition of the mosque. When someone tries to disturb it, there are already people who remind one another that this is the condition of the mosque. So it cannot be made uniform or controlled by one group. As a system, it is already running, or it has become a culture.” (Mosque Administrator, 2025).

This finding shows that mosque culture is not always inscribed in organizational documents. In many cases, the most effective culture is a social habit reproduced through everyday interaction. Casual conversations on the mosque veranda, light banter after prayer, and personal communication serve as means of reducing tension. In such informal spaces, problems can be raised without pressure, differences can be explained without harsh debate, and relationships among congregants can be strengthened emotionally.

This unwritten system also functions as a mechanism of social control among congregants. When certain parties attempt to standardize the mosque or pull it toward one particular group, congregants and administrators already share a collective awareness that prompts them to remind one another. Harmony, therefore, no longer depends solely on the mosque chairman; it has become a shared culture. This demonstrates the success of transformative communication: inclusive values initially encouraged by the administrators gradually become part of the congregants’ social awareness.

3.1.6. Compromise in Worship Practices as a Strategy for Sustaining Harmony

The sixth finding shows that mosque administrators’ communication produces concrete compromises in worship practices and da’wah activities. These compromises are not intended to mix religious practices indiscriminately but to provide proportional space for congregants with different preferences. The thesis data reveal several forms of compromise: the rotation of preachers from NU, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi backgrounds; the rotation of Friday preachers;

differences in adhan and dhikr practices according to the preacher's background; the performance of *qunut* on certain days; and the facilitation of commemorations of the Prophet's Birthday and Isra' Mi'raj.

“This mosque accommodates all Islamic organizations without siding with any particular group. The ustadz and regular study speakers are divided based on group background; each week, the mosque invites speakers from NU, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi backgrounds in rotation. Friday preachers are also arranged in rotation. *Qunut* in the dawn prayer is performed on certain days, while on other days it is not performed. The mosque also facilitates the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and Isra' Mi'raj.” (Mosque Administrator, 2025).

This compromise in worship practices is an important finding because it gives concrete form to egalitarian communication. Administrators do not merely state that all groups are respected; they translate that respect into policies governing mosque activities. The rotation of preachers and Friday speakers, the scheduling of *qunut*, and the facilitation of Islamic commemorative events serve as social instruments for maintaining a sense of fairness among congregants.

Such a compromise, however, requires a high degree of sensitivity. If it is not communicated well, compromise may be read as indecisiveness. In this case, compromise becomes a strategy for maintaining the mosque as a shared space. This practice shows that harmony does not require all congregants to agree at all times; rather, it requires that they be willing to accept a shared mechanism perceived as fair.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study show that congregational harmony in an urban residential mosque does not emerge automatically; it is shaped through a continuous, gradual, and culturally grounded communication process. In the context of congregants with diverse religious affiliations, the communication of mosque administrators functions not merely as a means of conveying information but as a social mechanism for negotiating identity, managing religious symbols, reducing tension, and building a shared sense of belonging. Therefore, the communication of mosque administrators in this study should not be understood only as an individual leadership style, but as a culture of religious communication that operates in the everyday life of the mosque (Mahfud et al., 2024).

The main finding of this study indicates that the communication pattern of mosque administrators tends toward an egalitarian-transformative model, namely a form of communication that combines openness, equality, participation, personal approach, and congregational empowerment. In the thesis document, this model is described as a communication style that emphasizes inclusive communication, participatory engagement, personal interaction, collaborative decision-making, and informal culture as key elements in maintaining congregational harmony. Thus, this discussion positions egalitarian-transformative communication as an entry point for understanding how a residential mosque can become a space of harmony amid internal diversity within the Muslim community (Attahiry, 2026).

3.2.1. Residential Mosques as Spaces for Negotiating Religious Identity

Urban residential mosques have characteristics that differ from those of traditional village-based, organizational, or institutional mosques. Congregants in residential mosques generally come from diverse social and religious backgrounds. They do not always share a long social history with one another, do not always come from the same religious tradition, and do not always have uniform preferences in worship practices. For this reason, residential mosques often become meeting spaces for various expressions of Islam (Mahfud et al., 2024).

In the case examined in this study, such diversity is visible in the presence of congregants from NU, Muhammadiyah, Salafi, and general Muslim backgrounds. Differences in worship practices, such as *qunut*, collective dhikr, the number of adhans during Friday prayer, *shalawatan*, the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday, and Isra' Mi'raj, are not merely technical variations in worship. They also carry dimensions of identity. For some congregants, these practices symbolize attachment to particular religious traditions. Therefore, when such practices appear in a shared mosque space, they can become an arena of contestation: who has the greatest right to shape the mosque, whose tradition should become the standard, and which Islamic orientation should be considered the most representative (Huda, 2024).

This is where the significance of the research findings becomes clear. The mosque administrators did not choose the path of standardization, but the path of negotiation. Their decision to give space to diverse groups, rotate preachers, arrange Friday sermon speakers, and accommodate particular worship practices at certain times shows that the mosque is positioned as a shared space rather than the property of any one religious affiliation. The thesis also notes that the mosque administrators, together with representatives from various groups, held deliberations and produced several accommodative decisions, such as accommodating all groups, rotating religious teachers and Friday preachers, regulating the practice of *qunut*, and facilitating the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and Isra' Mi'raj (Dewi et al., 2026).

Conceptually, this finding broadens the understanding of harmony. Harmony does not mean eliminating differences, but creating social mechanisms that allow differences to coexist in the same space without turning into domination or conflict. Thus, the mosque is not only a place of worship, but also a cultural arena where religious identities are negotiated peacefully.

3.2.2. Egalitarian Communication as a Politics of Recognition

One of the central findings of this study is that the mosque administrators developed an egalitarian form of communication. In this context, egalitarian communication does not mean that all groups must have the same practices. Rather, it means that all groups are given fair and proportional recognition. Egalitarian communication works through three main forms: listening to congregants' aspirations, providing space for participation, and preventing the domination of one group over the identity of the mosque (Honneth, 1995).

This finding is important because internal mosque conflicts are often triggered not only by differences of opinion but also by feelings of not being recognized. Congregants can accept differences as long as they do not feel excluded. Conversely, small differences can become serious conflicts when one group feels that its voice is ignored or that its tradition is considered illegitimate. Therefore, the communication of mosque administrators that opens space for deliberation becomes an important instrument for building a politics of recognition at the level of the mosque community (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024).

In this context, deliberation is not merely an organizational procedure, but a cultural practice for distributing recognition. When congregants are given space to express their opinions about preachers, study schedules, forms of activities, or certain worship practices, they are not merely providing technical input. They are also receiving a symbolic message that their presence matters to the mosque. This is why egalitarian communication can strengthen congregants' sense of belonging.

This finding also shows that the position of mosque administrators in a heterogeneous mosque cannot be limited to administrative management. Mosque administrators must also act as mediators of identity. They need to manage group voices, understand religious sensitivities, and ensure that the mosque is not pulled toward becoming the property of one particular group. At this point, egalitarian communication becomes a social strategy for maintaining symbolic justice among congregants.

3.2.3. Symbolic Interaction: Transforming Symbols of Difference into Symbols of Togetherness

Symbolic interaction theory helps explain why the communication practices of mosque administrators significantly impact congregational harmony. From this perspective, human beings act based on the meanings they give to things. These meanings do not emerge naturally, but are formed through social interaction. In the context of the mosque, *qunut*, *adhan*, *dhikr*, the Prophet's Birthday, religious study sessions, and even the position of the preacher are not merely religious activities. They are symbols interpreted by congregants (Blumer, 1969).

At first, these symbols had the potential to become sources of tension. *Qunut* could be read as a symbol of NU tradition; the absence of *qunut* could be associated with Muhammadiyah or Salafi orientations; collective *dhikr* could be understood as a particular form of religiosity; while the choice of preacher could be interpreted as a sign of the mosque administrators' alignment with a certain group. This means that conflict does not arise merely from the worship practice itself but from the social meanings attached to it (Nadia & Faizah, 2024).

However, through inclusive communication, the mosque administrators renegotiated these symbols of difference. *Qunut* was no longer understood as the domination of one group but as a practice reserved for certain days. The absence of *qunut* was also no longer understood as a rejection of another group, but as a form of accommodation for different congregants. The rotation of preachers was no longer read as a struggle over the pulpit, but as shared representation. In this way, the communication of mosque administrators transformed symbols of difference into symbols of togetherness (Muthoifin & Rhezaldi, 2024).

This is an important contribution of the study. It shows that harmony is not built only through discourses of tolerance, but through the reconstruction of symbolic meaning. Mosque administrators do not merely arrange schedules; they regulate the social meanings of religious symbols. In simple terms, they not only manage activities, but also manage the perceptions, feelings, and identities of congregants.

3.2.4. Transformative Leadership: From Congregants as Users to Congregants as Owners

The findings also show that the communication of mosque administrators does not stop at an accommodative function. It has a transformative dimension because it is able to move congregants from a passive position toward a participatory one. Congregants are not treated merely as users of mosque facilities, but as part of a community that helps determine the direction of mosque life (Setinawati et al., 2025).

In transformational leadership theory, leaders do not merely command. They inspire, empower, give attention, and move members beyond personal interests. In the context of this study, the transformative dimension appears when mosque administrators build two-way communication, open discussion forums, involve congregants in decision-making, and position congregants as partners in prospering the mosque. The thesis notes that collaborative decision-making is not only a technical aspect of management, but also a leadership communication strategy for maintaining harmony and unity amid diversity (Chaplin, 2025).

The transformation that occurs is not limited to mosque programs, but also affects the psychological position of congregants. Congregants who feel heard are more likely to feel a sense of belonging. Congregants who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to help protect the mosque. Congregants who help protect the mosque are less likely to be provoked by differences. Thus, transformative communication creates a chain effect: from involvement emerges trust; from trust emerges a sense of belonging; and from a sense of belonging emerges a commitment to maintaining harmony.

This shows that congregational harmony is not only the result of the mosque administrators' ability to reduce conflict, but also the result of their ability to build participation. The mosque becomes harmonious not because there are no differences, but because congregants feel that they are part of a shared process. In this context, the mosque administrators succeed in transforming the mosque from merely a place of worship into a space of socio-religious participation.

3.2.5. Informal Communication Culture as Hidden Governance

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the importance of informal communication. Casual conversations after prayer, meetings on the mosque veranda, joking with congregants, personal greetings, and mutual reminders in a relaxed atmosphere all become important parts of the mechanism for maintaining harmony. This shows that mosque governance does not always operate through formal documents, organizational structures, or official meetings. There is a subtler form of governance, namely hidden governance through a culture of informal communication (Heuser & Wolf, 2024).

Informal communication has power because it reduces social distance. In formal forums, congregants may feel reluctant, defensive, or overly cautious. In casual conversation, however, issues can often be discussed more lightly. Tension can be eased through humor. Objections can be expressed without sounding confrontational. Misunderstandings can be clarified before they grow larger. Thus, informal communication becomes an early detection space for potential conflict.

The thesis shows that the unwritten culture of mosque administrators through informal communication helps strengthen social bonds and maintain harmony amid diversity. In fact, the harmony that was initially built through the approach of the mosque administrators gradually became an unwritten system or shared culture. This is highly important. It means that the success of the administrators' communication is evident not only when the mosque chairman is able to solve problems, but also when congregants themselves develop awareness of the need to protect one another (Muin et al., 2024).

At this point, informal communication becomes more than ordinary conversation. It becomes a cultural mechanism for building social attachment. In the context of a heterogeneous

mosque, this social attachment is crucial because conflict often grows when relationships among congregants are cold, distant, and merely functional. Conversely, when congregants know one another personally, differences in worship practices become easier to accept because they no longer see one another simply as “different groups,” but as fellow congregants with social ties.

3.2.6. Religious Compromise as a Practice of Internal Muslim Moderation

The results of this study also demonstrate that religious moderation should not be solely understood in interfaith relations. Moderation is also needed in the relations among Muslims themselves, particularly in many metropolitan Muslim communities where fellow Muslims have varied connections, customs, and worship preferences. Here, moderation appears not as a slogan but as a concrete compromise: alternating Friday preachers, changing religious speakers, regulating *qunut*, and facilitating religious events from different traditions (Kushidayati & Rosyid, 2025).

This compromise should not be seen as combining the religious teachings or distorting the religious beliefs. Quite the opposite, a communal method to organize a shared place. A residential mosque is not the private space of a group but a social facility inhabited by numerous expressions of Islam. Thus, it is of utmost importance that mosque managers develop methods that enable each congregant to worship peacefully without feeling that their identity is lost (Katni et al., 2026).

This compromise reflects the religious-cultural idea that religious actions are constantly embedded in social contexts. Religious teachings have a normative character, but their application in social arenas does require intelligence, communication, and sensitivity to the condition of the congregation. Good mosque administrators not only know religious proofs but also people; not only know the law but also the inner environment of congregants; not only guard right and wrong but also ensure that truth is not presented in a way that destroys brotherhood.

Thus, this study demonstrates how internal Muslim moderation can be nurtured through fair, empathic, and proportional communication. Mosque administrators do not push all congregants to be the same, but ensure that all attendees remain unified in one mosque connection. This is a concrete type of moderation, not a notion but a daily practice of communication.

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that the congregational unity in an urban residential mosque is not a product of standardization of religious rituals but rather a result of the mosque administrators' ability to manage differences communicatively, fairly, and inclusively. The multiplicity of attendees from Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Salafi, and other Muslim backgrounds is not depicted as a threat but as a socio-religious reality to be maintained by discourse, deliberation, and proportional recognition. In this connection, the mosque is a site of worship but also a space of negotiating identity, where the management of different religious symbols and rituals remains within the framework of oneness.

The main outcome of this study reveals that the communication of the mosque chairman follows the egalitarian-transformative communication model. The egalitarian character is expressed in the mosque administrators' readiness to provide room for different groups of attendees, to avoid the domination of any one group, and to make the mosque a common home. At the same time, the transformative dimension is present in the capacity of the administrators'

communication to generate trust, to promote congregational involvement, and to transform initial social relations that might have been tense into more fluid, collaborative, and mutually protective ones. Thus, congregational harmony is the product not only of formal choices but also of informal communication culture, personal interactions, and an unwritten social order that develops in the everyday life of the mosque.

This study contributes by arguing that the building of internal harmony in the Muslim community can be done through the culture of mosque communication that is egalitarian, compassionate, and empowering. This study enriches the field of religious and cultural studies by demonstrating that moderation not only takes the form of large-scale discourses but may also be achieved through mundane practices: listening to congregants, accommodating differences, judiciously controlling worship symbols, and making the mosque a shared space. Thus, urban residential mosques can be an essential model for managing intra-Muslim diversity, especially when mosque administrators can translate differences into collective energy to prosper the mosque and sustain social harmony.

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